



Kílala Lelum Health and Wellness Cooperative - Research Charter

1. BACKGROUND

Kílala Lelum Health and Wellness Cooperative is a non-profit Indigenous Health organization that has been operating in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver since 2018. Kílala Lelum's Health Centre offers an inter-professional team-based primary care home that includes a partnership of services between Indigenous Elders and Healers and primary care providers. The mandate of Kílala Lelum is to provide culturally safe and effective care to patients/members from all Nations and communities. Specifically, Kílala Lelum has the mandate to enact the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action 19 to 23¹, which includes establishing measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples and to recognize, respect, and address the distinct health-related needs of all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. To this end, the Kílala Lelum acknowledges its mandate to participate in research that aims to promote health equity and enhance the health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples, wholistically. The purpose of this Charter is to guide the Kílala Lelum Research Committee to a) promote research that aligns with the philosophy, values and broader mandate of the Kílala Lelum and b) communicate with potential research partners with respect to the processes of research conducted at Kílala Lelum.

Kílala Lelum 3-Year Research Vision Statement (2024- 2027): The 3-Year Vision is to be engaged in innovative research that reflects the needs of and provides benefits to our urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous members, the wider community of Indigenous people living in the vicinity and beyond, and for Kílala Lelum to be recognized as a model organization in Canada for conducting community-based, culturally safe, equity-oriented, participatory research in urban, inner-city healthcare.

2. GUIDING VALUES

We begin by acknowledging the land we are on and the teachings that guide us—gifts passed down through generations of Indigenous Peoples who have cared for these territories since time immemorial. At Kílala Lelum, research is understood as a practice that can support healing—of people, relationships, and land—when it is rooted in values that reflect Indigenous worldviews,

¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action*. Winnipeg, MB: Author.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/trc-calls-to-action.pdf>



protocols, and priorities. These values are shared in the spirit of relationship-building and collective growth.

Respect: Research should seek to honour the cultural integrity, knowledge systems, and lived realities of Indigenous Peoples. Respect means listening deeply, moving with humility, and creating space for Indigenous values and practices to guide the work. It also includes respect for land, water, air, plants, and medicines—recognizing the relational responsibilities held with all living beings. Respect grows through sustained connection and trust.

Reciprocity: Reciprocity invites mutual exchange and care. It is nurtured when researchers ask, “What is being given to this work, and how can we give back in a good way?” Reciprocity can take many forms—offering honoraria, sharing knowledge, creating mentorship pathways, or ensuring community benefit. It is not transactional, but relational, extending across all stages of the research journey.

Relevance: Research is meaningful when it reflects the experiences, needs, and priorities of Indigenous communities. Relevance is shaped by community-defined goals, not academic agendas alone. It involves using Indigenous methodologies—such as storytelling or Sharing Circles—and grounding the work in the social, historical, and cultural contexts of place (e.g., the Downtown Eastside). Relevance is a question to return to at every stage: Is this work useful? For whom?

Responsibility: Responsibility flows from relational accountability. Researchers are entrusted with stories, histories, and futures. With that comes the responsibility to uphold protocols, follow through on commitments, and ensure the work brings benefit, not only now, but into the future. Responsibility also means using one’s gifts in service of collective wellbeing, whether through mentorship, advocacy, or systems change. Responsibility is to the people, the land, the data, and the relationships formed.

Relationships: At Kílala Lelum, relationships are sacred, intergenerational, and ongoing. Research grows from honest, reciprocal relationships with members, Elders, staff, peer workers, and community partners. It is through these connections that research becomes meaningful. Relational work also includes recognizing power dynamics, being transparent, and staying accountable to the people involved in shaping the work. Methods, ethics, and outcomes are all grounded in relationships.

Representation: Representation is about voice, dignity, and presence. It means honouring Indigenous knowledge holders as co-creators, and reflecting stories and strengths in ways that feel true and respectful. It also means asking who is shaping the narrative, who is represented,



and who benefits. Through respectful language, imagery, authorship, and meaning-making, research becomes a site of affirmation, not harm. These values reflect Kílala Lelum’s commitment to ethical, decolonial, and community-embedded research. All proposed projects will be reviewed with these values in mind, alongside the following reflection questions²:

- What are the unique benefits of proposing research at Kílala Lelum?
- What kinds of learning opportunities are the researcher/team willing to engage in?
- What potential hidden costs or resource needs should be considered?
How will the researcher/team navigate anxieties or tensions that can emerge in community-based and decolonizing research?

By honouring these values, research becomes a pathway for collective healing, cultural resurgence, and Indigenous self-determination, strengthening not only the work but the people and lands it touches.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Equity: Research honours the need to address differences in health outcomes and access that stem from systemic inequities. It acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples have been disproportionately impacted by colonial policies and social determinants of health—and that these impacts vary across gender, age, ability, and community context.

Action-Oriented: Research is most meaningful when it leads to action. Projects are encouraged to generate knowledge that contributes to tangible improvements in health, care, and policy—particularly for Indigenous Peoples and Kílala Lelum members. When possible, research strengthens ties across governments, funders, agencies, and community partners, fostering systemic change through shared efforts.

Participatory Approaches: Research grows through relationships. Co-creating research with Kílala Lelum leadership, staff, members, and peer workers supports relevance and respect. Engaging community throughout—from design to dissemination—ensures that research is shaped by those most connected to its purpose.

Capacity-Building: Research is an opportunity to build collective capacity. This may include supporting staff or people with lived and/or living experience in research roles, offering training

² Adapted from Elwood, J., Andreotti, V., & Stein, S. (2019). *Toward braiding: Handout 1*. Guelph, ON: Musagetes Foundation. <https://decolonialfuturesnet.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/towards-braiding-handout-1.pdf>



and mentorship, or creating space for members, staff, and Elders to guide, orient, and teach. Learning moves in many directions; researchers are also expected to grow through this work.

Place-Based: Place matters. Research that is grounded in the histories, cultures, and relationships of the Downtown Eastside and broader K'emk'emeláy (Vancouver) holds deep relevance. Projects are encouraged to honour Host Nations—x^wməθk^wəyəm, Skwxwú7mesh, and səllwətał—and to reflect the specificity of community-defined priorities, land-based practices, and local knowledges.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Data is relational and powerful. Kílala Lelum upholds Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights to govern data through the First Nations principles of OCAP®, the Métis-specific principles of OCAS, the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles, and other Indigenous research and data governance frameworks. Research agreements are co-developed and clarify how data is stored, accessed, interpreted, and shared—always centring Indigenous ownership, control, and stewardship.

Ceremony and Cultural Protocol: Research may be guided by cultural protocol and ceremony, as directed by Elders or Knowledge Holders. Ceremony can support safety, clarity, and connection across all phases of the work. Researchers are invited to engage with humility, consent, and openness to teachings.

Reflexivity and Self-Location: Research begins with self-awareness. Researchers are encouraged to reflect on their positionality, assumptions, and potential biases—recognizing how these shape relationships and the research itself. Sharing a self-location statement and being open to course correction are acts of accountability and growth.

Healing-Centred and Strengths and Desire-Based Framing: Research honours Indigenous strength, resilience, and cultural resurgence. Projects are encouraged to move away from deficit narratives and the pathologization of Indigenous experiences, and toward stories of survivance, wellness, and community-led solutions. A desire-based lens focuses on narratives of hope, possibility, and agency, and what communities are dreaming, building, and reclaiming for the future.

Ethics Beyond Compliance: Ethics is much more than a checklist. Research at Kílala Lelum honours relational ethics, spiritual care, and community accountability. Institutional frameworks (e.g., TCPS-2) are respected, but so too are the ethical teachings and protocols held by Indigenous communities.



Knowledge as Medicine: Stories and teachings are sacred. Research honours knowledge as a living medicine that must be treated with care and consent. Sharing knowledge in ways that foster healing, continuity, and community benefit is an act of service.

Relational Accountability: Research is rooted in relationships. Trust, transparency, and reciprocity shape every phase of the work. This includes meaningful engagement with advisory committees, regular reporting to Kílala Lelum, and inclusive, culturally grounded knowledge sharing. Researchers are invited to continually ask: *How am I showing up for those who are showing up for me?*

4. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIVITIES

Goals	Objectives	Activities
1) Research conducted with Kílala Lelum reflects the needs of the DTES community and is conducted in accordance with the Principles of Research outlined in section 2.	1) That all research conducted with Kílala Lelum must first be approved by the Kílala Lelum Research Committee, and progress/challenges will be reviewed at quarterly committee meetings.	All parties interested in conducting research with Kílala Lelum will complete the pre-application checklist and request form, and pay a non-refundable administration processing fee (based on a sliding scale).



<p>2) That the outcomes of research conducted at Kílala Lelum be appropriately cataloged and made accessible to the DTES community</p>	<p>2) That all final outcomes of research should be collected by the Kílala Lelum research committee and archived on the Kílala Lelum website.</p>	<p>Upon completion of the research process at Kílala Lelum, a “final report” (in the form of a poster, manuscript, report, etc.) will be submitted to the Kílala Lelum Research Committee Coordinator and will be posted in the “research” section of the Kílala Lelum website, at the discretion of the research committee. Knowledge translation and exchange activities must be completed within a reasonable time frame.</p>
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4. RESEARCH COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The Kílala Lelum Research Committee shall be composed of a specific balance of members to ensure objective input and adequate community representation. The committee will strive to include community members, Elders, clinical staff, have Board and Member representation, as well as experienced researchers. Researchers with active studies in process or proposed at Kílala Lelum will be asked to declare a conflict of interest to facilitate an arm’s-length review process. The committee will be led by a “Committee Chair” and be supported by a staff person in the role of “Research Coordinator”. A “consensus” model of decision-making will be employed by the committee. Any committee member’s concerns need to be addressed before approval is granted. Any committee member will recuse themselves if they have a conflict of interest. The committee will meet quarterly and at the chair’s call. Upon submission of the pre-application checklist, the Research Committee Coordinator and Committee Chair will confer as to whether the application:

- a) Does not require an application (is not research, is research conducted elsewhere that requires limited involvement of KL membership and staff).



- b) Requires an application which can be reviewed by the committee by email.
- c) Requires an application and attendance at a committee meeting.

Researchers will be notified of the need to submit an application and attend meetings. When approval is granted, it will be provisional pending approval from the Institutional Board's ethics committee. The letter of approval will be issued by the Committee Chair following consensus approval.

Monitoring Ongoing Research

The Research Committee aims to monitor active research projects, promoting the exchange of knowledge between research teams and facilitating problem-solving. Active research groups will be invited to meet with the Research Committee on a biannual basis. In accordance with CIHR ethical considerations for research involving indigenous people in Canada³ and Chapter 9 of the Tri-Council Policy statement⁴, Kílala Lelum (KL) identifies the following key areas as points of discussion on evaluating a research project's active status.

Consent Procedure: How, when and where participants are approached, and by whom. Challenges will be reviewed, and potential solutions discussed.

Privacy & confidentiality: Reviewing current practices related to a participant's personal identification.

Recognizing Elders and Knowledge Keepers: An important aspect of Indigenous-focused research is ensuring that research aligns with community goals and values, and as such, requires ongoing consultation with community Elders or Knowledge Holders.

Customs & Codes of Practice: Researchers will be asked to share their ongoing experience with participants, community members, and other stakeholders.

Conflicts of interest

³ Canadian Institutes of Health Research. (2007). *CIHR guidelines for health research involving Aboriginal people*. Ottawa, ON: Author. https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/documents/ethics_aboriginal_guidelines_e.pdf

⁴ Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2022). *Tri-Council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans – TCPS 2 (2022)* (Chapter 9: Research involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada). Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada. https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2022.html



Kilala Lelum plays a role in stewarding community-based, Indigenous health research and promoting investigations that align with our guiding principles. Purposefully, the Research Committee (RC) membership comprises diverse individuals with roles as investigators, consultants, practitioners, community members, and board members at Kilala Lelum, as well as other allied health services and research groups. As such, Kilala Lelum recognizes that conflicts of interest (COIs) will arise in activities or situations that place an individual or institution in real, potential, or perceived conflicts between tasks or responsibilities related to research, personal interests, intra- and inter-institutional interests, and other interests. Committee members have the responsibility of being transparent, forthcoming, and consistent in reporting COI information, ranging from, but not limited to, personal or professional relationships to financial interests, activities, and other affiliations related to prospective projects. This requires committee members to be aware of their own potential for real or perceived COIs. The diversity of research interests necessitates that COIs be assessed on a case-by-case basis through honest and open communication between committee members when reviewing each prospective project.

5. FUNDING

Parties conducting research with Kilala Lelum will then be required to pay a research application processing fee (based on a sliding scale). Private donations to Kilala Lelum will also be utilized to support the Research Committee's operations and activities.

6. RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Committee Role	Committee Member(s)	Email address
Committee Chair	Mathew Fleury	Mathew.Fleury@kilalalelum.ca
Board Representative	David Tu	David.Tu@kilalelum.ca
Research Committee Coordinator	Paula Amaya	Paula.Amaya@kilalalelum.ca
By virtue of her office (ex officio)	Leah Walker	Leah.Walker@kilalelum.ca



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